

and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps and designated a Naval Aviator on June 16, 1943. In 1945, Mr. O'Keefe, then a 1st Lieutenant, and his 24-plane fighter squadron, "the Death Rattlers," deployed upon Okinawa where they would participate in his first aerial combat. Their assignment was to prevent repeated nightly Japanese aerial attacks in the harbor. An "ace" fighter pilot, Mr. O'Keefe was credited with shooting down a total of seven Japanese airplanes in the Battle of Okinawa, including five in one day. At the age of 21, Mr. O'Keefe became one of the youngest "Aces" in World War II. For his meritorious efforts, he was awarded the United States Navy Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the Gold Star.

Following World War II, Mr. O'Keefe obtained a degree in business administration from Loyola University and went to work with his father in the family funeral business. In 1958, he purchased Bradford Funeral Service and merged it with the O'Keefe family business to create Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Home. That same year, Mr. O'Keefe founded Gulf National Life (GNL) Insurance Company. Over the course of several decades, GNL acquired a number of other smaller companies and became the largest insurer in Mississippi with over 200 affiliated funeral homes.

Deeply rooted in politics on the Gulf Coast, Mr. O'Keefe's grandfather was alderman-at-large in Ocean Springs. In 1935, Jerry O'Keefe's uncle, John O'Keefe served as Mayor of Biloxi for two years, before resigning to become an Adjutant General in the Mississippi National Guard. Jerry O'Keefe was elected to the Mississippi State Legislature seven years later in 1959 and served one four-year term. Mr. O'Keefe was elected Mayor of Biloxi in 1973 and served eight years. Known as an energetic and innovative mayor, he was awarded Biloxi's Citizen of the Year in 1976.

As mayor, Mr. O'Keefe was a strong proponent for civil rights and the advancement of the African-American community. While mayor of Biloxi, he confronted the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) by rescinding a permit they received to hold a parade in the town. When the KKK proceeded with the parade, he had them arrested. Mr. O'Keefe was guided by his moral compass and ethical disposition during a time when few stood up against the Ku Klux Klan for fear of retribution. Mr. O'Keefe received death threats and the KKK burned a cross in front of his house. Still, Jerry O'Keefe stood his ground.

After three decades of politics, Mr. O'Keefe shifted his focus to fundraising and philanthropy. He has been a supporter and donor to numerous organizations, schools, and museums. In 1967 and 1975, Mr. O'Keefe received awards from the United Fund Campaign for Distinguished Service to the people of Harrison County. He has been the recipient of the Pine Burr Area Boy Scouts of America's Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1995, he and his wife, Annette, founded The O'Keefe Foundation with an initial endowment of \$10 million. The foundation is the primary financial sponsor of The New Hope Center in Ocean Springs, a center for disabled youth. Additionally, the foundation supports numerous organizations throughout the state and the greater

Gulf Coast region which includes the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, St. John's and Mercy Cross High Schools, Habitat for Humanity, Shaw University, Tougaloo College, St. Alphonsus Elementary School, YMCA, the St. Vincent Depaul Society, the Walter Anderson Museum, Boys and Girls Clubs, Christians United of Jackson County, and the City of Ocean Springs.

Mr. O'Keefe and his first wife, Annette Saxon O'Keefe, have 13 children. He and his later wife, Martha, have worked to reinforce family bonds through regular church attendance, Sunday dinners, and family vacations. Mr. O'Keefe is an active member in the Nativity B.V.M. Cathedral.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in expressing my sincere gratitude to Mr. Jeremiah "Jerry" Joseph O'Keefe of Ocean Springs, Mississippi for his service to the state of Mississippi and to this country.

SUPPORT OF H. RES. 440 CONGRATULATING RECIPIENTS OF 2010 WORLD PEACE PRIZE H.H. DORJE CHANG BUDDHA III AND THE HONORABLE BEN GILMAN

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support of H. Res. 440 which congratulates H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III and the Honorable Ben Gilman for winning the 2010 World Peace Prize.

Recently, I introduced this resolution to highlight the awarding of the World Peace Prize to both H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III and Congressman Gilman. The World Peace Prize is a very distinguished honor granted by the World Peace Council in recognition of individuals who exemplify selflessness in their devotion to humanity.

I commend H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III and the Honorable Ben Gilman for their multiple contributions to our society and urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 440.

THE CAMERAS IN THE COURTROOM ACT OF 2011

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced the Cameras in the Court Act of 2011 to ensure transparency and accountability in the judicial branch by providing television coverage for open proceedings before the United States Supreme Court.

This is companion legislation to a bipartisan bill, S. 1945, introduced yesterday by Senator DICK DURBIN (D-IL), Assistant Senate Majority Leader, and Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY (R-IA), Ranking Member on the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. The Cameras in the Courtroom Act of 2011 respects the individual rights of the parties appearing before the Court, only

applying to open proceedings. In addition, a majority of the Supreme Court justices may vote to exclude television coverage of a particular proceeding if they decide that such coverage would result in a violation of the due process rights of any of the specific parties before the Court.

This legislation would only apply to those Supreme Court proceedings currently open to the public. Individual Americans are welcome to observe these Court proceedings, but only in an extremely limited number. The Supreme Court has seating for several hundred, however they typically only allocate roughly 50 seats for the general public. And that is what is so troubling. Given the sweeping nature of recent Supreme Court decisions, this limited seating almost screams elitism, secrecy and contempt for the public by this third branch of our government.

I strongly believe that the separation of powers and our system of checks and balances is essential to the successful operation of a democratic society. However transparency and accountability are necessary to ensure that those checks and balances are properly applied, even in the judicial branch itself.

Regardless of the scope of the legislation, Congressional debates and votes on each and every bill are televised and available to Americans through CSPAN. It was not enough for reporters to pass along their accounts of what occurred, nor was it enough for the limited number of Americans who could directly observe from the House and Senate galleries. The entire American public—it was determined—was entitled to know what the Congress was undertaking in its name.

It strains any reasonable precept of transparency to assert that such momentous recent Supreme Court deliberations such as *Bush v. Gore*, *Kelo v. City of New London*, and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* were available only to the 50 Americans who were allowed and fortunate enough to be among the chosen few to wait in the queue for public seating.

Americans today live in a world where information is near instantaneous; where with a handheld cell phone they are able to communicate through live video conferencing with nearly anyone in the world. Today's technology allows us to bring events from across the globe to our fingertips in real time.

It is essential that the highest arbiter of the law of our land provide all Americans with the opportunity to observe United States Supreme Court proceedings in a manner that will enable them to form their own opinion through direct observation. Transparency and accountability are the windows through which everyday citizens may observe and protect democracy. Are there risks that some will play to the cameras? Yes, absolutely. Are those risks offset by the public's need, indeed right, to know? Absolutely yes. Sunshine—even in the Supreme Court—remains the best disinfectant against those who might feel that the black robe of life-tenure grants them permanent immunity from accountability for their words and opinions.

I urge my colleagues to support transparency and accountability in the United States Supreme Court and cosponsor the Cameras in the Courtroom Act of 2011.